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Remarks

The present response is to the Office Action mailed in the above-referenced case on April 25, 2003. Claims 1-25 are standing for examination. The Examiner has rejected claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Sonesh et al. (U.S. 6,046,762), hereinafter Sonesh.

Applicant has carefully studied the prior art reference provided by the Examiner, and the Examiner's rejections and statements in the instant Office Action. In response, applicant herein provides arguments to more particularly point out the subject matter of applicant's invention regarded as patentable, and to establish that the base claims in their present form distinguish unarguably over the prior art applied.

The Examiner stated that, regarding claims 1, 8, 15, 20, 22 and 23, Sonesh discloses applicant's method for establishing a remote agent station from a call center comprising all of applicant's claimed limitations. Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's interpretation of the teachings of Sonesh as reading on applicant's claims.

Applicant argues that Sonesh teaches an alternative invention for solving a similar problem. The Examiner has applied the rather common practice of rejecting claims because the prior art teaches an alternative invention that might accomplish the same or similar purpose, which does not provide a prima facie rejection. To create a prima facie rejection, all of the actual elements of the claimed invention must be shown in the art, in the order in which they are recited in the claims. It has long been accepted practice in the USPTO that prior art references must be analyzed and applied for what they teach as a whole, not bits and pieces taken out of context, which seems to be the case in this instance. In some lengthy and highly technical references, establishing what is taught as a whole is a difficult assignment, and still unclear and arguable after treatment by both sides. Not so for this simple reference.

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Applicant's invention provides a method and apparatus whereby a company can station agents in remote locations other than at the call center, such as in their own homes, and still provide full call center functionality and CIS accessibility, without the requirement for additional proprietary equipment and connection lines, and also provide a means wherein data associated with an incoming call may be automatically forwarded for display to the remote agent, at the time, or before the associated call is received by the remote agent.

Referring now to Fig. 1 and associated description of applicant's specification, a preferred embodiment of applicant's invention utilizes a dual connection between the remote agent station 126 and call center 101. The first connection is a telephone link between the remote agent's telephone and telephony switch 109 of call center 101. A plurality of outgoing call ports are reserved for the home agent connection, one such line 117 is illustrated in Fig. 1 for the telephone link from switch 109 to remote station 126, which is completed from the PSTN via line 127 to the remote agent station. The second of the dual connections is a data link between the home agent's PC and data services at the call center, made via a telephony link 129 from remote station 126 via the PSTN to CTI processor 111 at the call center.

The manner in which the data and call connections are made and used relative to calls switched to remote agents is important to applicant's invention, and requires the dual connection disclosed in applicant's invention. In a preferred embodiment of applicant's invention, referring again to Fig. 1, wherein the data connection is kept active by virtue of the dual connection, when a call arrives at telephony switch 109 from a client, and the routing for the call has been determined to be the remote agent, the call is switched to the remote agent station. An outgoing call is subsequently placed to the telephone of the remote agent station, and at the same time, data associated with the call, whether arriving with the call or accessed from database 113 using information derived from the call, is transmitted to the display unit of the remote agent station, by virtue of the always-open data connection. In this manner important client information or a script for

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the agent may be displayed at the remote agents station at the time of the arrival of the call, or even before the call arrives, allowing the remote agent to better service the call.

Sonesh, on the other hand, clearly does not anticipate all of applicant's limitations in the base claims, in the order in which they are recited, which is required for a prima facie rejection. Specifically, regarding applicant's claim 1, the claimed method for establishing a remote agent station from a call center comprises the steps of establishing the data link between the remote agent station and CTI processor of the call center, routing the call to the remote station, retrieving data associated with the call from a database at the call center, forwarding said data to the remote station via the data link, and then placing a call from the call center to the remote station for switching the incoming call to the remote station.

Referring now to Fig. 1 of Sonesh, it is clear that there is only one connection between the remote agent workstation 121 and the call center audio and video access, via data network 112. Sonesh, therefore, does not teach the functionality and capabilities of applicant's invention as claimed. Incoming calls to local agents 120 are routed over LAN 113, and incoming calls to remote agents 121 are routed via a data network 112. Local agents 120 and remote agents 121 are equipped with workstation computers, telephone headsets, cameras, etc. for handling calls in various media forms, and have access to a database server 130 of the multimedia call center. A database server 130 is accessed by the agents for purposes of running call center applications, storing and retrieving caller data, and providing information for the caller.

Applicant argues, however, that the teachings of Sonesh cannot read on applicant's claims, because the teachings pertaining to retrieval of data associated with an incoming call are vague and inconclusive. Sonesh teaches that distributed call centers and remote agents have the ability to share databases and other call center administration data, etc., but there is no specific teaching whatsoever in Sonesh of establishing a remote agent station from a call center comprising the

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specific steps of first, determining routing for the call to be the remote agent station, then retrieving data associated with said call, forwarding said associated data to the remote station display unit before call connection to the remote station, and then placing the call from the call center to the remote station and switching the call to the remote station, as is specifically recited in applicant's claims. Data associated with the incoming call routed to the remote station is not automatically forwarded to the remote station according to the teachings of Sonesh; rather, any information required by the remote station is retrieved by the remote station after the call has been forwarded to the remote station.

Applicant therefore believes that independent claim 1 is clearly and unarguably patentable over the prior art presented. Applicant's claims 8, 15 and 20 recite methods for establishing a remote agent station from a call center, and a home agent call center system in accordance with claim 1, reciting similar limitations. Applicant believes claims 8, 15 and 20 are then also patentable over the prior art, as argued above by applicant on behalf of claim 1. Claims 2-7, 9-14, 16-19, and 21-25 are then patentable on their own merits, or at least as depended from a patentable claim.

Applicant therefore respectfully requests reconsideration, and that the present case be passed quickly to issue.

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If any fees are due beyond fees paid with this office action response, authorization is made to deduct those fees from deposit account 50-0534. If any time extension is needed beyond any extension requested with this amendment, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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by


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